



TEN·8

afterimage

Curated by Pelumi Odubanjo

Presented in collaboration with International Curators Forum

1 May – 13 September 2026

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Heather Agyepong, Ajamu X, **Dawoud Bey**,
Zarina Bhimji, **JEB (Joan E. Biren)**,
Derek Bishton, **Brian Homer & John Reardon**,
Vanley Burke, **Chila Kumari Singh Burman**,
Gon Buurman, Renee Cox, **Rotimi Fani-Kayode**,
LaToya Ruby Frazier, **Joy Gregory**, Sunil Gupta,
George Hallett, Claudette Holmes, **Roshini Kempadoo**,
Dave Lewis, **Cynthia MaiWa Sitei**, The Masterji Family Collection,
Ming de Nasty, Ingrid Pollard, **Franklyn Rodgers**,
Donald Rodney, **Jamel Shabazz**, Lorna Simpson,
Jo Spence and Rosy Martin, James Van Der Zee,
Maxine Walker, **Carrie Mae Weems**, Deborah Willis



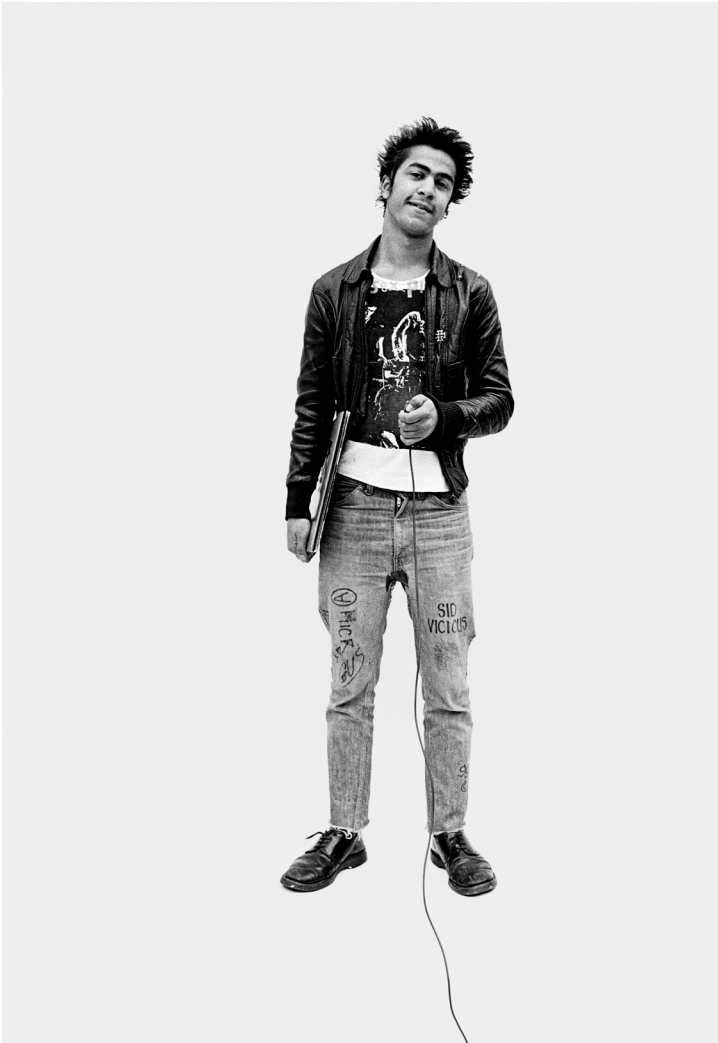
Franklyn Rodgers, *Monolith 1*, 1992. Courtesy the artist.

Ten.8 afterimage explores the legacy and enduring impact of *Ten.8* (1978–1992), a photography journal that emerged from the radical cultural and political landscape of the Midlands. Across its run, *Ten.8* played a vital role in shaping critical debates around representation, documentary practice, and the politics of photography.

Structured around key issues of the journal's history, *Ten.8 afterimage* uses *Ten.8* as an archive through which to continue and extend the conversations initiated in its pages. The exhibition specifically looks at the issues titled *The Self Portrait*, *Consent and Control*, *Spellbound*, *Bodies of Excess*, *Evidence: New Light on Afro American Images*, and *Critical Decade: Black British Photography in the 80s*.

Ten.8 was founded in Handsworth in 1978 by a group of photographers including Derek Bishton, Brian Homer, Nick Hedges and John Hodgetts. Over the following 14 years, the magazine published 37 editions and assembled some of the most vocal and diverse photographers and writers to contribute to the critical cultural debates of the 1980s. *Ten.8* was initially established to support and promote photography in the Midlands. As the journal developed, it became an important platform for new ways of thinking about the social, cultural, and political responsibilities of photography. Emerging during a period of profound change in Britain, *Ten.8* was shaped by key moments in the latter half of the twentieth century, including the Handsworth and Brixton uprisings, and the rise of Black British cultural politics. The journal also engaged in wider international struggles and movements, including feminism, gay and lesbian liberation and resistance to apartheid, colonialism and state violence.

Ten.8 afterimage considers the continued relevance of the contexts and concerns that the journal addressed. Bringing photographic works from the 1980s and 1990s into dialogue with a selection of more recent works, including newly commissioned work by British-Ghanaian artist Heather Agyepong, the exhibition foregrounds questions of visibility, power, authorship, and representation, which remain pressing today.



Vijay Kataria, 1979

© Handsworth Self Portrait (Derek Bishton, Brian Homer & John Reardon)

Representation and Community

Across this room, questions of self-representation, power, and authorship are explored through photographic works that consider the camera's role in shaping identity and self-image. These works question ideas of permission, origination, and what it means to photograph our communities, locally and globally.

The Self Portrait (1980) emerged directly from *Handsworth Self Portraits*, a project undertaken by **Derek Bishton, Brian Homer, and John Reardon** during the summer of 1979. Heavily featuring the series, the issue marked an important early moment in the journal's development, foregrounding self-portraiture as a critical means through which visibility, agency, and self-representation could be examined.

Works in this room also draw out themes from later editions of the journal, including *Restricted Practices* (1982), *Style/Youth* (1982), *Rural Myths* (1983) and *Consent and Control* (1984). In particular, *Consent and Control* foregrounded urgent debates around photography as both a technology and instrument of power, highlighting its role within state surveillance, ethnography, and anthropology, and the unequal relations embedded in acts of looking. These concerns draw attention to photography's ability not only to record, but also to shape how individuals and communities are classified, interpreted, and represented.

Through *Handsworth Self Portraits*, photography became collaborative, subverting conventional relationships between photographer and subject. In ***The Masterji Family Collection***, vernacular portraiture reveals photography's role in shaping memory and belonging across diasporic South Asian communities. While in *Spear of a Nation*, **Cynthia MaiWa Sitei** returns to colonial archives to ask how such images might be contested and re-authored in the present.



*Hortense Conner and her granddaughter Tyisha, 1987 © JEB (Joan E. Biren)
from Making A Way: Lesbians Out Front by Anthology Editions*



Ajamu X, Bodybuilder in Bra, 1990. Courtesy the artist

Sexuality and the Body

By the mid-1980s, *Ten.8* had grown significantly in reach and influence, reflected in its sustained engagement with urgent questions of race, gender, and sexuality alongside wider debates on working-class representation, intersectionality, and political struggle in Britain.

These concerns became especially pronounced in later issues, including *Rage & Desire* (1988), *Spellbound* (1988), *The Promise of Pleasure* (1988), and *Bodies of Excess* (1991). Across these issues, the body emerged as a contested political site through which pleasure, desire, visibility, and power were explored. In particular, *Bodies of Excess* foregrounded Black, gay and queer photographic practices, while *Spellbound*, co-edited by Roshini Kempadoo and Rhonda Wilson, examined migrant and Black photographic practice in Britain alongside lesbian representation and diasporic image-making. Artists featured across these issues, whose practices deeply resonate with these topics, convey deep questioning of representation in its fullness—through community, performance, and kinship.

The works in this room extend these debates through distinct photographic strategies. **Jo Spence** and **Rosy Martin** use collaborative self-imaging to confront memory, illness, gender, and social conditioning. **Ajamu X**, **Sunil Gupta**, and **Rotimi Fani-Kayode** place Black and Asian queer desire and intimacy at the centre of photographic representation. **Donald Rodney's** *Psalms* reflects on bodily fragility, inheritance, and racialised vulnerability, while Ingrid Pollard foregrounds Black lesbian visibility and the interconnected nature of race, sexuality, and collective political struggle. **JEB (Joan E. Biren)** and **Gonuurman** foreground feminist and lesbian photographic practices that challenge how communities are depicted and who controls the terms of representation.

Evidence: New Light on Afro American Images

Ten.8's issue *Evidence: New Light on Afro American Images* (1986) marked a significant moment in the journal's history. Edited by acclaimed British photographer and writer Val Wilmer and coordinated by Roshini Kempadoo, the issue brought together groundbreaking essays by leading African American scholars, artists, and writers, highlighting one of the journal's most important engagements with Black photographic histories beyond Britain.

The issue included Angela Davis' essay *Photography and Afro-American History* and the essay *Remaking the Past to Make the Future: The Photographic Collection of the Schomburg Center for Research into Black Culture* by Professor Deborah Willis. These seminal texts foregrounded photography as a critical site through which Black and American histories could be preserved, contested, and reimagined.

In this room, works by key figures in twentieth- and twenty-first-century African American photography are brought into dialogue across generations. **James Van Der Zee**'s portraits remain foundational to the story of Black photographic modernity, shaping enduring visual languages of dignity, style, and self-fashioning. **Carrie Mae Weems** and **Lorna Simpson** examine gender and visibility through conceptual practice. **Dawoud Bey** and **Jamel Shabazz** foreground Black urban life and portraiture as spaces of encounter, community, and historical witnessing, while **Renee Cox** confronts representation through performative self-image and radical Black feminist critique. **LaToya Ruby Frazier** raises questions about labour, family life, and structural inequality, and **Deborah Willis'** work bridges image-making and archival scholarship to preserve and re-read Black photographic histories.

Together, these works reflect photography's power to recover history and reshape how Black life is depicted and remembered.

Critical Decade: Black British Photography in the 80s

Ten.8's final issue, *Critical Decade: Black British Photography in the 80s* (1992), was produced at a moment of growing financial instability for the journal. Reflecting on *Ten.8's* history and continuing political relevance, it reaffirmed photography as a critical site through which questions of race, power, representation, and social change could be addressed.

Edited by Stuart Hall, David A Bailey, Andy Cameron, and Derek Bishton, with support from Darryl Georgiou and Mark Blackstock, the issue sought to provide grounding for new critical responses to photography in the 1990s. Rather than simply closing the journal, it extended longstanding questions central to *Ten.8*: who produces images, who controls their circulation, and how photography remains politically active in moments of social transformation.

The works in this room revisit themes central to *Critical Decade*, including Black self-portraiture, documentary practice, postcolonial identity, gender, sexuality, and African cultural reference. Artists including **Vanley Burke** and **Franklyn Rodgers** foreground Black British social life through portraiture and documentary grounded in everyday experience. **Joy Gregory** and **Maxine Walker** question representations of Black womanhood of the time, using self-portraiture to interrogate questions of beauty and power. **Roshini Kempadoo**, **Chila Kumari Singh Burman**, **Sunil Gupta**, **Claudette Holmes**, and **Dave Lewis** extend these concerns through conceptual, experimental, and self-reflexive approaches to image-making.

These works reflect the breadth of practices that *Ten.8* helped bring into critical view over its run.

Heather Agyepong Survival '26

Heather Agyepong is a British-Ghanaian artist whose practice explores diasporic memory, mental health, invisibility, and the archive through photography, performance, and moving image.

Commissioned for this exhibition, *Survival '26* (2026) responds to magazines and journals produced in Birmingham during the late twentieth century, particularly *Survival Magazine* (1984), a 28-page publication created by Merrise Crooks-Bishton with Black women living and working in Handsworth, as part of a groundbreaking literacy project called Handprint.

Survival Magazine emerged in response to the lack of accessible publications addressing the lives of African and Caribbean young women in Britain, particularly in the West Midlands. Produced in the format of a women's magazine and used in educational settings, it covered topics including fashion, childcare, diet, literacy, starting a business, birth control, and health through African and Caribbean perspectives. The magazine offered a vital space in which Black women could see their lives and concerns reflected in print.

In this new work, Agyepong uses the original cover figure of *Survival Magazine*, Angela Samuda, to explore what survival means in the present. Through a series of studio portraits and gestures, she reactivates the social and emotional life attached to the image, asking what survival means now for Black women, Black women artists, and forms of cultural production shaped by precarity.

Themes of exhaustion, care, sisterhood, love, and vulnerability emerge across the work, alongside extracts from conversations with Merrise Crooks-Bishton. The work also includes newly-made portraits of original *Survival Magazine* contributors, Merrise Crooks-Bishton, Christine Seymour, Jenny Douglas and Ifemu Omari.

New work by Heather Agyepong can also be seen in the Gallery's Window Box.

Ten.8: (1978–1992)

Ten.8 was founded in Handsworth, Birmingham in 1978 and grew out of efforts by a group of photographers, including Derek Bishton, Brian Homer, Nick Hedges and John Hodgetts, to establish a gallery. Instead, the group were offered funding for a magazine. Over the following 14 years, the magazine published 37 editions and assembled some of the most vocal and diverse photographers and writers to contribute to the critical cultural debates of the 1980s.

Today, *Ten.8* is a valuable archive, offering unique insight into issues around documentary photography, cultural theory, emerging digital technologies and the concerns of Black, feminist, lesbian and gay photographers.

Initially, editorial meetings were held at Sidelines, a small community design project established by Bishton and Homer at 81 Grove Lane, Handsworth. An editorial group formed around them, including John Taylor, Roy Peters, Paul Lewis, Rob Moore, Jon Stewart and John Reardon. The name *Ten.8*, suggested by Peters, was adopted because it referred both to traditional plate cameras and to the 10 × 8 inch print format commonly supplied by photo agencies to publishers. From its earliest issues, *Ten.8* became an important platform for critical debate around photography, and throughout the 1980s developed into a major international publication, bringing photography into dialogue with social history, cultural theory, and political debate.

Over the course of its run, many important figures joined the editorial team, which for many years was led by John Taylor and Derek Bishton. These included Jo Spence, Rosy Martin, Ed Barber, Dick Hebdige, Val Wilmer, Sunil Gupta, David A Bailey, Sue Green, Roshini Kempadoo, Rhonda Wilson, Andy Cameron, and Stuart Hall. *Ten.8* also forged many collaborations, for example, producing two joint publications with The Photographers' Gallery. In 1988, Wilson and Kempadoo co-edited the catalogue for the Spectrum Women's Photography Festival, published as a special supplement to *Ten.8* No.30, *Spellbound*.

Events

Curator's tour Saturday 11 July, 1pm

Join curator Pelumi Odubanjo for an informal tour of the exhibition.

Ten.8 afterimage Symposium Saturday 5 September

For further details please see our website.



A filmed interview with Pelumi Odubanjo, Heather Agyepong, and David A Bailey can be viewed in our Resource Area on the Mezzanine Floor and online.

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Thanks

Commissioned artist Heather Agyepong for her engaging new work.

All of the incredible artists who are represented in this exhibition.

Our generous lenders to the exhibition: Autograph, Band Gallery, Hales Gallery, The Hyman Collection, Ming de Nasty, Tarla Patel, Pitt Rivers Museum, Tate, V&A, Wedge Collection, Amanda Wilkinson Gallery and many of the artists themselves.

Former Ten.8 editorial board members for their advice and experience: Derek Bishton, Darryl Georgiou and David A Bailey.

Merrise Crooks-Bishton, Christine Seymour, Jenny Douglas and Ifemu Omari, contributors to Survival Magazine who have supported Heather Agyepong's commission.

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